GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2319
ANSWERED ON:30.11.2016
Transparent Process for Passport
Nayak Shri B.V.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

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(a) whether the Government has taken any steps for making the process of getting passport transparent and easy and if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether the Government is also trying to ensure to make the passport issuing process foolproof so that no anti national element can misuse it and if so, the steps taken in this direction;

(c) whether a racket of middlemen involved in making passports on fake address has been allegedly exposed recently; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken against those found guilty?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) Yes. With the implementation of the Passport Seva Project, the process of passport issuance has become very transparent and easy. Under this system, the applicants are required to apply for their passports online, upload relevant documents, make the payment online through debit/credit card or SBI net-banking/SBI Challan, schedule an appointment and then visit the designated Passport Seva Kendra (PSK). A user friendly portal has been made available. When an applicant visits the PSK, an Electronic Queue Management System (EQMS) working on the principle of First-in First-out is available at all PSKs to monitor the flow of applicants. After completing the non-sovereign activities by the staff of the Service Provider, applicants move to the Passport Office Staff for verification of documents and granting of passports. The shortcoming(s), if any, in the documentation, is conveyed to the applicant there itself. Exit letter giving position of the application ensuring fairness is provided to the applicant at the time of exit. The applicants can track the status of their applications themselves through portal and also SMS services. In the current system of passport issuance, there is no manual intervention at any stage, complete process is digitally flown with re-engineered process through a single visit clearance.
The Government has simplified the process of issuance of passport in order to make it more expedient, convenient and transparent. The Ministry of External Affairs made two major changes w.e.f. 26 January, 2016 that have expedited the process for first time passport applicants as well as made it more convenient to secure an online appointment at the local Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs). As per these changes, the first time passport applicants who furnish Aadhaar Card, Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC), PAN Card and an affidavit in the prescribed format, will get faster service, without payment of additional fees, subject to successful online validation of Aadhaar, EPIC and PAN cards from the respective databases. The passports under this liberal dispensation will be issued on Post-Police Verification basis.

Securing online Appointments for submission of passport applications at PSKs has been made easier and convenient. The new provision is allowing applicants to choose any appointment date from the earliest five available dates (working days) for scheduling/rescheduling an appointment for passport related services. Earlier, the System used to offer only one available date to the applicant for seeking appointment for passport related services. These measures have simplified the process of passport issuance and reduced the difficulties faced by the applicants.

(b) The process of issuance of passports has been made foolproof under the new system which is capable of leaving no scope for misuse by anti national elements. Before granting any passport, in-person appearance is mandatory avoiding chances of impersonation. Background check is carried out from the entire Passport database for duplication and criminality status. Capture of Biometric data and photograph on the spot and matching of biometric data with Aadhar database (fully integrated since August 2015), also ensure issuance of the passport to the right person. Police Verification of personal particulars and antecedents of applicants including address, where required, is very critical to issue of passports. All these measures and precautions available in the system have made the passport issuance process foolproof.

(c) & (d) Very few cases of such fake passports have come to the notice of the Ministry. In one such case, through Writ Petition WP (C) No. 1699/2015 filed as PIL before the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi, the attention of the Ministry of External Affairs was drawn to the issuance of five passports by the Passport Office in Delhi with non-existent addresses on the basis of incorrect police verification report. The passports were revoked by the Passport Office in Delhi in April 2016 following the due procedure.

The involvement of any racket, however, has not been identified in the recent past.